Acts of Intercourse: "Miscegenation" in three 19th Century American Novels.

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> Until this period of the evening, the duties of hospitality and the observances of religion had prevented familiar discourse. But the regular offices of the housewife were now ended for the night; the handmaidens had all retired to their wheels; and as the bustle of a busy and more stirring domestic industry ceased, the cold and selfrestrained silence, which had hitherto only been broken by distant and brief observations of courtesy, or by some wholesome allusion to the lost and probationary condition of man, seemed to invite an intercourse of a more general character.[1]

In a 19th century American novel like Cooper's *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, intercourse usually means conversation, an important activity which supports, sustains and secures a community's perception of its shared identity. If we take the above quotation as an example, Cooper manages to convey a sense of common purpose and harmonious enterprise, to such an extent that the people described seem almost to function as members of one family. But intercourse of another, sexual kind also takes place in the novel, between one of the white daughters of this family and a Narragansett sachem. The second kind of intercourse takes place outside the confines of, and disturbs the kind of stability and integrity represented by, the first. The unanimity of social institutions is disrupted and threatened first by the arrival and second by the acceptance of the Indian within the white family. When it is remembered that, in 19th century American history, the word intercourse is further associated with a series of acts regulating the transaction of land and goods between European Americans and Native Americans, and that there was

1 James Fenimore Cooper, *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (Columbus, Ohio; Charles E. Merrill, 1970).

contention about exactly what kind of contact, if any, should be maintained between the two groups, then it can be seen that this single word carries with it a complex sequence of literary and cultural connotations.

Intercourse, then, is a useful term with which to begin looking at aspects of relations between Native American Indians and Europeans in certain 19th Century American novels. For the word can have several definitions. It implies physical intimacy; it can also mean commercial exchange, including the transaction of property: and finally, it suggests discourse, or dialogue. These different meanings indicate different levels we might profitably look at.

In its modern sense, intercourse suggests sexual relations, and several 19th century novels imagine the possibility of union between Indians and Whites. I have chosen three of these; *Hobomok,* written by Lydia Maria Child and published in 1824; Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie,* which appeared in 1827; and the second, revised, 1833 edition of *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (or *The Borderers),* by James Fenimore Cooper, which was first printed in 1829.2 Although all three of the works under consideration were written by Americans in the 1820s, the time and place of their narration is 17th century New England, so there is an element of dialogue between texts and historical contexts. The dialogue also involves a reconstruction of early colonial history. These novels integrate or negotiate with Indian versions of historical events as well as attempting to create colourful rather than credible Native characters. For example, in 1653, a woman was hanged for taking the Indian demiGod Hobbamock as her husband, and it is therefore interesting that Child's novel *Hobomok* begins with Mary Conant going into the forest late at night and meeting the Indian character of the same name, who she later marries and has a child by.[3] Instead of the dominant 17th century imperatives of war and suspicion, *Hobomok* dramatizes the possibility of

2 Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1991); Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie; or Early Times in the Massachusetts* (New York, Garret Press, 1969).

3 See Carolyn Karcher's introduction to *Hobomok,* xxii.

an assimilation which is at once sexual and cultural. And yet, what I intend to show in this article is that Indian loving is in fact not very different in its final results from the kind of Indian hating which characterized later works such as James Hall's *Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the West* (1835) and Robert Montgomery Bird's *Jibbenainosay, or Nick of the Woods* (1837).

In addition, there is a process of intercourse between the stories themselves: the Preface of Child's novel includes a reference to Cooper, for example, and it has been argued that *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* expresses opposition to the prospect of "miscegenation"[4] as it is raised in *Hobomok* and *Hope Leslie*.[5] In Sedgwick's novel, to take one example, Faith Leslie, sister of the eponymous heroine, becomes the wife of Oneco, a Pequot Indian. In a sense, theirs is a paradigm of such relations, for instances of Whites becoming assimilated by Indians far outnumber instances of reverse acculturation.[6] In addition, moreover, Hope's future husband Everell, the eldest son of the Fletcher family which adopts her, is for long periods of the novel closely associated with Magawisca, the eldest daughter of the Pequot chief Mononotto, who is taken in by the Fletcher family after her tribe has been largely destroyed by colonizers.

In the title essay of *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture,* Stephen Greenblatt has argued that Indians "serve as a screen onto which Renaisance Europeans, bound by their institutions, project their

4 Miscegenation is italicized because it presupposes the acceptance of race as a scientific concept, something which was acceptable in the 19th century, but is no longer valid today. Originally, of course, the term referred to the union of white and black people, and it may therefore invite comparisons between Native Americans and Afro-Americans. Such comparisons are beyond the scope of this essay, but the temptation superficially to link the two groups is to be avoided: as Winthrop D. Jordan has pointed out in *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812,* white attitudes to intermarriage varied when it came to Natives and Africans (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 162-163. There is perhaps one initial distinction to keep in mind: Indians were colonized, Africans were enslaved. Ethnic stereotyping emerges in part from this difference. The Native tends to be characterized either as the noble savage, or the bloodthirsty warrior, while the African was identified by colour, and by economic dependency. See Bahr, Chadwick, Stauss (eds), *American Ethnicity* (Lexington, Mass. &Toronto: D. C. Heath, 1979), pp. 211-255.

5 Richard Beale Davis cites Leslie Fiedler in his introduction to *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, xi.*

6 See Crevecour's *Letters from an American Farmer,* where he says that "thousands of Europeans are Indians, and we have no examples of even one of those aborigines having from choice become Europeans!" Quoted in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature,* Vol. *I* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath & Company, 1990), p. 916.

darkest and most compelling fantasies."[7] In the case of *Hope Leslie,* the fantasy involves not only "miscegenation," and the concomitant possibility of a life free from patriarchal constraint, but also the forbidden attractions occasioned by love between siblings. The fact that Everell and Magawisca are identified at one level as brother and sister means that there is an element of the incestuous about their attachment to each other. However, the relationship between them is a screen in more than just one sense. For there is a submerged element of the incestuous about the attraction between Hope and Everell themselves. Hope is the daughter of the woman whom Everell's father loved but failed to marry. After her mother's death, she is adopted by Everell's father.[8]

Sedgwick defuses the horror of the incest element by transferring it from the Everell-Hope to the Everell-Magawisca axis, or, in other words, from the European to the Aboriginal sphere. By raising the possibility of intimacy between the novel's most eligible bachelor and its main Indian female, Sedgwick can rely on her reader's objections on all sorts of grounds. First, such a friendship runs counter to the generic logic which demands the marriage of Hope, the protagonist and heroine, and Everell, its hero. Second, any such relationship between Everell and Magawisca goes against the racial and sexual mores of the day. Once that crisis is averted, however, then the real marriage can proceed regardless of the fact that it seems slightly dubious in itself. The formal pressure to produce the correct ending to some extent dissolves the possibility of "miscegenation," resolves the novel's tensions, and absolves the author of any responsibility associated with that resolution.

In *Hobomok,* there is a similar mixture of desire and aversion in the treatment of mixed marriage. Although Mary Conant, the novel's female protagonist, does wed the Indian of the title, the narrative makes it clear that she is insane with grief at the news that Charles Brown, the man she

7 Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York & London: Routledge, 1990), p. *22.*

8 Of course, at one level, the growing attachment between Everell and Hope is a replay of the attachment between their respective parents, an attachment which was prevented from running its normal course by Hope's grandfather. The patriarchal constraints of life in England are lifted in America however, both in *Hobomok* and *Hope Leslie,* where the unthinkable often becomes possible. It is therefore feasible to read the relationship between them almost as a feminist paradigm. Cooper, who is very far from being a feminist, uses a very similar chain of devices in *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish,* where the Heathcotes attempt to adopt an Indian who then runs off with, and marries, their daughter. As the novel develops, their son falls in love with Martha, who is also adopted. Again, the incestuous element is disguised by being displaced onto the Indian.

really loves, has apparently drowned.[9] The obvious implication is that there is something inherently irrational about any woman who'd want to marry an Indian. There is a similar message in *Hope Leslie,* where Faith is contented with her marriage to Oneco only because she is child-like and simple minded. And in *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish,* Whittal Ring, one of the two characters who become Indianized, is in fact a half-wit.

There is a clear element of physical attraction between Mary and Hobomok, nevertheless, for the text dwells lovingly on his physical vigour, and the marriage does produce offspring, which proves that the love is consummated physically. In *Hope Leslie,* there are many indications of Faith's physical closeness to Oneco, and the story of their relationship is clearly based on that of Eunice Williams, who refused the chance to retum to white society after her captivity by Indians, married one of them, and had two daughters.[10] In *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish,* the union of Ruth and Conanchet also results in a child. But there is also a countering, guilty awareness of social transgression. Mary Conant frequently alludes to her sense of degradation and to her social ostracism, and Hope receives the news that her sister is married to an Indian with something close to moral nausea.

In Sedgwick and Cooper, the introduction of an outsider signals a violent disruption to the stability of the white family, the most basic unit of its society. In each case, the arrival of the other instigates a crisis which threatens that society. In Child's novel, too, the embrace of the Indian is an act which causes a change in the female protagonist's links with her relatives, friends, and neighbours. So the Indian can be said to represent the very opposite of everything which is civilized, and therefore a danger to ethnic and sexual boundaries.

We have an interesting dynamic here, of simultaneous attraction and fear. The Indian becomes the screen onto which forbidden fantasies—such as the erotic fascination of adults outside the confines of marriage and the sexual desire of relatives for each other—are projected. In this way, such fantasies are displaced by being embodied in another, alien person, and then further displaced by having these aliens removed. Once more, the convention of the correct marriage becomes the means by

9 It is suggested that "there was a partial derangement of Mary's faculties" which "had almost hurled reason from his throne....," in *Hobomok,* pp. 120-121.

10 See June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. 91.

which these desires are disguised and controlled. The white family is restored to its proper place at the heart of American society.

II

Already it is possible to see that intercourse between characters in these novels involves something more than physical intimacy. There is also an attempt at dialogue between cultures, a process which might be called textual "miscegenation," a kind of cultural synthesis. Again, though, there is a similar dynamic of fascination and distance at work in this merger. In Hope Leslie, for example, Everell reads Spenser to Magawisca, and she in turn relates some of her tribal traditions. After this initial exchange of stories between the characters, there is a further exchange of historical narratives. First, Everell listens to Digby, the family servant who is a veteran of the war against the Pequods, the tribe led by Magawisca's father, Mononotto. Digby represents the official view that the war was justified, even though it resulted in the massacre of some 700 people, many of them women and children.[11] Then he hears a different version of the same massacre from Magawisca:

> All the circumstances attending [the war with the Pequods] were still fresh in men's minds, and Everell had heard them detailed with the interest and particularity that belongs to recent adventures; but he had heard them in the language of the enemies and conquerors of the Pequods; and from Magawisca's lips they took a new form and hue; she seemed, to him, to embody nature's best gifts, and her feelings to be the inspiration of heaven … it was putting the chisel into the hands of truth, and giving it to whom it belonged.[12]

It is clear at this point that Sedgwick is very deliberately trying to revise her reader's knowledge of history, while surreptitiously claiming a position for literature as a mediator in more sense than one. The narrative may not privilege Magawisca's account as much as Everell does, but it does attempt a kind of formal "miscegenation," a dialogue where Native

11 The figure is given by Phillip Vincent in his *A True Relation of the Late Battel Fought in New-England* (1638), which is quoted in Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 72. The real figure is estimated to be somewhere between 300-700.

12 *Hope Leslie,* p. 92.

versions of history are represented alongside those more official ones communicated by Digby. And even though *Hope Leslie* employs one of the standard plots of the British novel, the inclusion of Indian voices appears to give it an original, even an aboriginal, dimension.

In other words, "miscegenation" is not simply posited at the thematic level, but at the textual level also. There is a dialogue between the characters of Everell and Magawisca, but there is also a kind of mixing of traditional English generic structures and Native elements. Similarly, in *Hobomok* aspects of Indian myth, scenes of Native life, speech and history, are combined with conventional novelistic pattems.[13] And yet, the endings of both novels conspire to arrange the disappearance of the Indian, and the contents of both seize the Natives and their lands for the purposes of dramatizing 19th century thoughts on nature and human nature alike.

The formula is largely the same for *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* as well, for Cooper structures his revisions of colonial history with a plot which corresponds in many ways to "The Tempest." These novels appropriate Native elements for the purposes of colour, interest, and uniqueness but as soon as this is achieved, they dispose of those elements and revert to endings determined by imposed literary designs. Rather than undertaking to construct a shared territory, a category of American fiction which is truly mutual, they dispossess and then banish the Indian. In fact, banishment can be said to be the prerequisite of their inclusion in the first place. For by their choice of exile, the Indians in these novels affirm the propriety of American destiny.

III

Nevertheless, these works do something more than dramatize novelistic formulas. There is a process of dialogue between each text and its political environment, in the sense that they address the question of "miscegenation" and employ it as a trope for Indian-White relations in

13 The deer-hunting scenes in Chapter XII correspond to aspects of Native American mythology as they are described in Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier,* pp. 146-179.

the 19th century.[14] As Lucy Maddox has argued, the voluntary exile of the Indians in two of these texts is paralleled by the Federal policy of the 1820s, when both Gradualists and Removalists alike accepted that Indian tribes had to move west to survive. In Child's novel, the Indian Hobomok disappears after his marriage to Mary Conant, though he leaves behind a son. In Cooper's *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish,* the Indian Conanchet is killed after his marriage to Ruth Heathcote, though again he leaves behind a son. And in Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie,* Hope's sister disappears into the wilderness with her Indian husband Oneco, as does Magawisca.

In other words, there is an equation at work here. Integration is followed by the disappearance of the Indian as a separate entity. Intercourse leads to the death of the Native American character. Maddox states the stark polarization of choices available to the Indian—assimilation or extinction. What these novels suggest is that both alternatives have the same final effect. Beneath the self-willed exile is the message that assimilation has as its goal the effective elimination of the Native Americans.

The removal of Indian tribes from the Eastern seaboard of America had largely been achieved by the time that Child, Sedgwick and Cooper wrote their novels. Voluntary withdrawal was supposed to mean that Indian lives and lands would remain free from further interference or intrusion. In exchange for the territory they were already losing, Indians could have land further west which would guarantee their continued survival.

In the 1820s, there was generally a consensus about the necessity of separation, although reasons differed between the two main sides. Removalists favoured relocation of American Indians on the grounds that they could not be civilized. Gradualists originally favoured peaceful coexistence between Whites and Indians until such time as the latter were assimilated by the former, but found that Indians were often de.stroyed by co-existence, and could only be preserved by their transfer elsewhere.

The official policy of removal can be said to have begun with the British Proclamation of October 7, 1763, which prohibited white settle-

14 See also Lucy Maddox, *Removals: Nineteenth Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Maddox demonstrates how miscegenation is used as a trope with which to explore issues of acculturation in the 1820s.

ment beyond a line corresponding approximately with the Appalachian mountains.[15] After the Revolution, the Americans continued where the British left off, and in 1790, the first of three similarly designated statutes appeared which attempted "to regulate trade and intercourse" between Native American groups and Americans of European descent.[16] Among its declared objectives was making the purchase of Indian lands by private individuals invalid unless or until ratified in public treaty with the Government of the United States.

That there were another two Intercourse Acts, in 1802 and 1834, attests however to the necessity of redefining Indian territory in the light of continual White expansion and changing federal policy. Whatever the thinking behind that policy, however, lndians were exchanging their lands in return for a series of promises which no Government would, or perhaps could, uphold.

So in addition to the novelistic imperative of the correct marriage, there is an historical imperative at work in these novels. Though the time and place of their narrated events is 17th century New England, they are written in the 1820s. What happened in narrated time must therefore justify or explain what is happening at the time of the narrating. In fact, the choice of historical location, with its hostilities and unstable relations between different groups (especially in *Hobomok)* may in itself have been intended to lend support to policies pursued by successive American governments at the beginning of the 19th century.

Not surprisingly, then, the messages communicated by Native Americans in these novels are remarkably similar in substance to the messages communicated by contemporary White commentators of Indian affairs. A kind of literary ventriloquism occurs:

> In her sleep (Mary) talks with the Great Spirit, and the name of the white man is on her lips. Hobomok will go far off among some of the red man in the west.[17]

> Take my own word, I am your enemy; the sun-beam and the shadow cannot mingle. The white man cometh—the Indian vanisheth.[18]

15 See William Washburn (ed.), *The American Indian and –he United States: A Documentary History,* Vol. 3 (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 2135.

16 See Washburn, *The American Indian and the United States: A Documentary History,* Vol. 3, p. 2151.

17 *Hobomok,* p. 139. In *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish,* Ruth makes a similar statement about hearing "the spirit that talketh to Narra-mattah in her dreams...," p. 319.

18 *Hope Leslie,* p. 199.

> The Great Spirit of thy fathers is angry that thou livest in the lodge of a Narragansett. His sight is too cunning to be cheated.[19]

All of these quotations are spoken by Indians, and all seem conveniently to agree with Federal policy towards them. In a sense, what happens here is a kind of literary ventriloquism: Indian characters are invented in order to express their recognition of their own eventual erasure from history. They conspire to arrange their own disappearance not only as individuals, but as representatives of the tribes they belong to. From the 17th century comes the message that Indians acknowledge the inevitability of their own destruction in the 19th. Again, intercourse becomes a trope for an assimilation which consequently leads to extinction.

IV

There is a striking overlap between the repeated erasure of the Indian in these fictional texts and their actual removal in history. During the same forty year period when the three Intercourse Acts were attempting to stabilize the purchase of land tracts "belonging" to Native tribes, but especially in the 1820s when the policy of removing a diversity of these peoples to reservations was gaining popular and political currency, different writers were engaged in a similar project of claiming imaginative territories once inhabited by Indians.

For example, in 19th century America, the forest often becomes the favourite site of Romantic or Transcendentalist possibility. "In the woods, we return to reason and faith," writes Emerson in "Nature."[20] But in the writings of Child, Sedgwick, and Cooper the forest is also the site of the savage, or sauvage: he or she who comes from the woods. In a sense, the wilderness becomes the scene of a struggle for territorial control:

19 *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish,* p. 317.

20 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature." In *The Heath Anthology of American Literature,* Vol. 1., p. 1473.

> On every other side, the hill was garlanded with laurels, now in full and profuse bloom; here and there surmounted by an intervening pine, spruce, or hemlock, whose seared winter foliage was fringed with the bright tender sprouts of spring. We believe there is a chord, even in the heart of savage man, that responds to the voice of nature. Certain it is, the party paused, as it appeared from a common instinct, at a little grassy nook, formed by the curve of the hill, to gaze on this singularly beautiful spot.[21]

This moment of reflection demonstrates what might be termed the condescension of retrospect: the writer looks back from the 19th century to the forest as a location for violence in the 17th century and allows for the possibility that Indians then might have appreciated nature in the way that New Englanders do in the historical present. The assertion of this quality of appreciation in the Native allows the author to imply a level of intercourse between her society and theirs which is not physical but instinctive, and therefore before and beyond any other differences. But what we see happening here is a fictional version of colonization: the forest is a property which once belonged to the Indians, but its ownership is now being negotiated and finally appropriated by the white imagination. Take for example this speech by Hope Leslie, the eponymous heroine of Sedgwick's novel:

> He must have a torpid imagination, and a cold heart, I think, who does not fancy these vast forests filled with invisible intelligences. Have these beautiful valleys of our Connecticut ... been seen and enjoyed only by those savages, who have their summer home in them?... Why may we not ... surmise that the spirits of those who have died for liberty and religion, have come before us to this wilderness, and taken possession in the name of the Lord?'[22]

The Intercourse Act of 1790 can be understood as a legislative sleight of hand: its name promises complementarity, but instead masks continuing confiscation. It is possible to see, however, a parallel sleight of hand at work among writers like Sedgwick. The love of nature becomes a point of contact between Indians and Whites, and this assignation of similarity then excuses the appropriation of the wilderness and its inhabitants for new literary projects. America then is not only a physical territory, but an imaginative one, and Sedgwick claims the right to inscribe it, to possess it on behalf of the pioneers who died settling it. And one of the reasons she puts forward for the right to depict the Native American is an alleged lack of historical or artistic self-representation in writing:

21 Sedgwick, Catharine Maria, *Hope Leslie,* p. 140.
22 *Hope Leslie,* p. *167.*

> Imagination may be indulged in lingering for a moment in those dusky regions of the past; but it is not permitted to reasonable instructed man to admire or regret tribes of human beings, who lived and died, leaving scarcely a more enduring memorial, than the forsaken nest that vanishes before one winter's storms.[23]

Intercourse implies a reciprocity of sorts. But the narrator establishes that this is impossible, for what is mute has no right of reply, and cannot therefore expect to be allowed to engage in true dialogue. The logic of the narrative at this point seems remarkably close to that of settlers who claimed a right to take Indian land on the grounds that Natives either had no concept of possessing it or did not do enough with it.[24] Since the Indians left no written records of their existence, according to Sedgwick's narrator, their voices can be appropriated for fictional purposes.[25]

Until recently, of course, the majority of *written* historical documents deriving from the post-Columbian settlement of America *were* by Europeans, and by white European males in particular. In North America, the standard texts of the early 17th century are by people like Smith, Winthrop, and Bradford. Although Native Americans do appear in these narratives they speak less often than they are spoken for or written about. Indeed, this becomes one of the defining characteristics of their racial identity. In "Leaming to Curse," Greenblatt shows how silence, or the speaking of unfamiliar and unintelligible tongues, is a feature of the literary savage as he is identified in Spenser[26] and Shakespeare.27 Inter-

23 Hope Leslie, p. 140.

24 Sedgwick comments on the alleged inability of the Native American to cultivate land when her narrator comments that "The savage was rather the vassal, than the master of nature; obeying her laws, but never usurping her dominion. He only used the land she prepared, and cast in his corn but where she seemed to invite him by mellowing and upheaving the rich mould" *(Hope Leslie,* 139). There is an ambiguity in the statement, for nature is important to Sedgwick, and the Indian is seen as a child of nature. Nevertheless, this relationship is also a sign of deficiency.

25 In Chapter IV of *Hobomok,* a similar idea is expressed. The Indians are "unlettered...[and] untutored people" who acknowledge that "the English were the favorite children of the Great Spirit, and that he had taught them words to speak to them," p. 29. Cooper allows the Puritans to justify themselves without comment when Ruth Heathcote says "He that made the earth, hath given it to us for our uses; and reason would seem to teach that if portions of its surface are vacant, he that needetb truly may occupy," p. 149. And Cooper also heads Chapter X, where Whittal Ring is returned to Wish-ton-Wish, with a quotation from *Love' s Labour' s Lost* which connects reading and writing with civilization, and lack of learning with the animalistic. The suggestion is that Ring, who is illiterate and Indianized, represents the Wild Man figure, though admittedly a burlesqued one.

26 Spenser, *The Fairie Queene, Book Vl, Canto IV,* Stanza 11, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London: Longman, 1977), 649. This is also quoted in the title essay of Greenblatt's collection, *Learning to Curse,* 21. It is all the

estingly, when Smith writes a letter of introduction for Pocahontas to Queen Anne, he links cultural and religious conversion with her ability to converse in English:

> About two yeeres after *[April 1613]* shee herself was taken prisoner; and at last rejecting her barborous condition, [she] was maried [I *April 1614]* to an *English* Gentleman, with whom at this present she is in England;[28] the first Christian ever of that Nation, the first *Virginian* ever spake *English,* or had a child in mariage by an Englishman....[29]

Child, Sedgwick and Cooper continue the tradition of marking Indian speech as separate and strange.[30] Child says of Hobomok that his "language was brief, figurative, and poetic."[31] Mrs Fletcher in Hope *Leslie* finds herself "startled with the beautiful forms in which [Magawisca] clothes her simple thoughts ... which are like pictures, cap-

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more interesting that in Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie,* Everell Fletcher reads Spenser to Magawisca shortly after her arrival.

27 See the New Variorum Edition of *The Tempest,* ed. Horace Furness (New York: Dover Publications, 1964), Act I, Scene II, lls. 415-427.

28 The gentleman was Sir John Rolfe. The marriage of Pocahontas and Rolfe is an example of how intercourse at the personal level between an English man and an Indian woman was used to help advance the cause of English settlement and expansion. It is ironic that, despite the commercial success of this marketing strategy, Pocahontas herself died, and her father's tribe was soon to be destroyed by the increased numbers of European settlers she helped to attract. And in the same way that lhe marriage was exploited for the purposes of colonization, the Indian characters in all tluee novels are used to promote the idea of a new literary territory: they are exploited for the purposes of establishing a new colony of writing, and then discarded.

29 Captain John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles,* in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature,* p. 155.

30 Of course, it can be argued that the Enlightenment and Romanticism intervene between the times Spenser and Shakespeare wrote and the period under discussion in the paper. And it can be pointed out that, far from being silent, Indian characters in Child, Sedgwick, and Cooper are all endowed with a kind of Ossianic eloquence. This eloquence allows the communication of a powerful critique of European colonizing practices at the initial stages of settlement, and this can be seen as an extension of Caliban's learning to curse, but not as the absence of language which Spenser pinpoints as the identifying characteristic of wildness. Moreover, the censure and condemnation of these characters is retrospective: it is directed towards the past, and has few implications for the historical present in which Child, Cooper, and Sedgwick live. More sinisterly, however, the Indian characters voice opinions which effectively makes them collaborate in their own disappearance, and this expressed desire to disappear can be interpreted therefore as an act of cultural silencing which is similar to that of writers like Spenser. In addition, the association of Indians with eloquence suggests, as Michael K. Foster argues in *From the Earth to Beyond the Sky: an Ethnographic Approach to Eour Longhouse Iroquois Speech Events,* a contrast between the restrained, logical language of civilized man and the emotional, unrestrained "eloquence" of the Indians. "The Indians were not extolled for any virtues of rational thought, but for their ability to appeal to the emotions; they were rhetoricians not logicians. Thus, even while praising the orators of the forest, the early writers were, in sense, damning them." (Ottawa, Canada: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service, Paper No. 20, 1974), pp. 7-8.

31 *Hobomok,* p. 121.

tivating to a youthful imagination."[32] When the English want to communicate with the Narragansett in *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish,* they manage to do so only because one of their number "knew how to discourse in [their] figurative language."[33]

In a sense, then, all of these novelists continue the tradition of the Wild Man in literature, a tradition which marks Indian language as different and strange, but which is nevertheless prior to the arrival of the European in America, and therefore inscribed on the Indians, and not derived empirically from them. For true dialogue to happen, of course, the other person must be allowed to speak, and yet these novelists prefer to determine the voice of their characters than to respond to it. The models they choose to represent are in themselves already represented, or constructed.

Of course, the question of Indian muteness has its own rewards: someone who is silent is not likely to interrogate preconceptions. Speech which cannot be understood except as noise can be translated in the way which most suits the needs of the writer. And the implicit downgrading of Indian representations has the effect of underlining the superiority of white civilization and culture. In turn, this justifies the departure of the Indian, an event which is in itself seen as poetic, or loaded with pathos, but inevitable.

V

From the very beginnings of European colonization, definitions of what constituted proper or indeed legal intercourse between whites and Indians were constantly developed and revised. Smith's story of how Pocahontas apparently saved him from execution is perhaps the earliest and most enduring image from a period when not only the region of New England but its aboriginal inhabitants were being mapped out and colonized by the English.[34]

32 ***Hope Leslie,*** p. 54-55.

33 ***The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish,*** p. 296.

34 Ironically, it seems more likely that the execution ceremony was in fact a ritual initiation into Powhatan's tribe, where Smith's old self was symbolically killed and he was adopted by a female member of the clan. Such

Pocahontas is cited in the Preface of Sedgwick's Hope Leslie. And in the novel itself, Magawisca, the Pequod protagonist, intervenes at the moment of Everell Fletcher's execution and saves his life at the cost of her own arm. The mutilation is a curious mixture of sexual and cultural masochism.[35] For the incident has clear parallels with John Smith's account of how Pocahontas saved him from death. As he narrates it, the incident dramatizes self-sacrifice. That it did not result in the death of the Indian makes little difference: she was prepared to die for his sake.

In all three of the novels under discussion, the sacrifice of the Indian is a self-willed gesture, but one brought about by circumstances beyond the control of each individual. In every case, a generic, ideological, and historical determinism can be detected. Intercourse, then, can be seen as something which has implications for cultures as well as individuals. And since I use intercourse as a model for how American literary texts might behave, rather than just a thematic element, I hope to add to our understanding of what these 19th century novels attempt to achieve and/or to repress.

There is a dynamic of inclusion and exclusion at work here. The inclusion of Indian characters can be seen as something which is demanded by the market place—works of fiction which featured Indian characters sold in their hundreds of thousands, and ran into many editions. The exotic appeal of characters who are often naked or scantily clad is too obvious to be stated. And their supposed sexual liberty also allows authors to embody forbidden intimacies while retaining a necessary distance. But the novelistic formula of the correct marriage closes off any possibility of further intercourse.[36]

The insertion can also be understood as a literary necessity, for it constitutes the originality of each work, its peculiar genius so to speak.

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a symbolic integration was meant to express the re-alignment or enlargement of group loyalties: Smith the Englishman had died, but Smith the friend of the Powhatans had been born.

35 The aspect of sexual mutilation deserves a paper in itself. The violence inflicted on Magawisca in the service of saving Everell is seen almost as natural—the instinctive and proper act of deference owed by an inferior being to a superior one.

36 In all three of the novels, the legitimacy of marriages between Indians and Europeans is questioned, for only native rites (if any) are performed, rather than the official, "legal" ceremony of the Christian church (although Child has Hobomok "divorce" Mary in case there any lingering doubts about the propriety of her subsequent marriage to Brown). Nevertheless, the fact of union suggests that good Indians are willing to he incorporated into white society. That the dispossession and/or acculturation of the Indian is always transposed into fiction as an act of intercourse, rather than rape, points to a blindness within the texts under discussion.

Once it is effected, however, there is a necessary and countering rejection, for the author cannot be identified with a culture which is constructed as having no written language. Finally, the inclusion can be seen as an historical requirement, for no discussion of American colonial origins and futures can proceed without incorporating the contribution made by Indian nations. Again, though, the desired absence (for whatever reason) of the Native American in the United States of the 19th century demands an explanation and concomitant exile in the 17th.

The exclusion of Indian characters is not just a response to sexual infraction, then, but a carefully thought out response to wider political and cultural agendas. What each novel does is to reconstruct earlier models of the Native in the light of personal, political, and literary needs in the 19th century. The return of the Native in these novels is conditioned by the necessity of permanent relocation. And intercourse operates as a strategy for showing the superiority of white civilization at almost every level, and for the appropriation of the indigenous at every other.